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E-Paper

IIT, AIIMS audits find more than fly in the soup

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NEW DELHI: A Food Safety and Standards Authority of India ([FSSAI](#)) third-party food safety audit of campus kitchens at 12 top Central institutions of higher education has found that providing good food to the best brains in the country isn't a priority for most institutions.

A majority of the institutions have failed to clear the food safety audit. Common problems, especially for those ranked lower in the audit, include cleaned utensils retaining food residue, rodent droppings around the kitchens, reheating of food several times, kitchen staff wearing shoes in the kitchen that are meant for the outside, choked bathrooms and overflowing sinks where utensils are cleaned.

FSSAI conducted the audits according to their draft food safety and standards (food safety auditing) regulations of 2017 for IIM Ahmedabad; Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, Delhi; IIT Mumbai; IIT Guwahati; IIM Kozhikode; IIT Delhi; Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata; IIT Chennai; AIIMS Jodhpur; IIT Roorkee; and IIT Kanpur.

At each institution, all kitchens and canteens were audited. Only most of IIM Ahmedabad's and IIT Roorkee's campus kitchens managed to pass the audit. The rest failed.

The auditors assessed the canteens, hostel kitchens, guesthouse kitchens and cafeterias on six parameters — design and facilities, which checks how the cooking area is maintained and whether they have safe food-grade cooking utensils and equipment; control of operations, or how food is actually prepared; maintenance and sanitation; personal hygiene; training and record keeping; and other comments, if any. The maximum score possible was 114, a score less than 77 was considered “non-compliant”.

Fssai Official told TOI they are at present writing to all 12 institutions with detailed audit reports and grades and asking them to conform to norms as soon as possible. A

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summary of the audit results accessed by TOI shows even institutions with relatively better grades were reusing vegetable oil, fungal or mould growth was found in vegetable storage areas, and the dough machines were rusted. "Personal hygiene is a major issue in nearly all kitchens," said an official. A premier medical education institute with one of the lowest scores was found to have shoes stored in the kitchen raw material storage area and an overflowing bathroom meant for kitchen staff.

At the other institutions the gaps include food storage areas used by kitchen staff as changing rooms, cockroach and other pest infestations, food and raw materials stored on the floor, drains not netted to prevent rat infestation, no cleaning and sanitation records, and stagnant water near the utensil-cleaning area. Many, it was found, were not FSSAI licensees either.

When contacted about the audit results, FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal said, "The idea is not to name and shame these institutions. We are still communicating the results to them. But they will have to meet the norms. The positive news is that some are coming forward to improve their kitchens."

Last year, a student found a dead rat in his south Indian thali at an IIT Delhi hostel. In Indore, recently, 15 students of a private engineering college fell ill after allegedly eating food contaminated by a dead lizard.